



A journal for restless minds

A SAINT FOR GEEKS?

Aiming for the infinite

STICKS AND STONES ...

And words hurt

ONCE UPON A DREAM

The measure of a man

DEACON'S DINER

Food for a restless mind

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

A Saint For Geeks?

Aiming for the infinite

The stereotypical computer geek, the one often depicted in film and books, resides in isolation surrounded by a plethora of computer equipment and almost always depicted as disheveled, hyperactive, suffering from manic paranoia, and completely antisocial. Definitely not the image of a saint. While there are those who would fit the stereotype, they are fortunately few and far between. I say this with a certain degree of confidence having over thirty years of high-technology experience.



Recently I came across an article which spoke of a young computer genius who died of leukemia in 2006 at the age of 15. On November 24, 2016, Cardinal Angelo Scola closed the diocesan phase in the canonization process for Italian teenager Carlo Acutis, a gifted computer geek, considered a genius by adults with computer engineering degrees.

Yet, as gifted as he was, his brief life was always centered on Christ. He once said *"To always be close to Jesus, that's my life plan."* Carlo attended Mass every day, he remained close to Jesus in whatever he did, whether praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament for hours, creating websites, or going to school like every other teenager.

His mother said, *"His immense generosity made him interested in everyone: the foreigners, the handicapped, children, beggars. To be close to Carlo was to be close to a fountain of fresh water... [he] understood the true value of life as a gift from God, as an effort, an answer to give to the Lord Jesus day by day in simplicity. I should stress that he was a normal boy who was joyful, serene, sincere, and helpful and loving company, he liked having friends."*

Carlo believed that *"All people are born as originals but many die as photocopies,"* for to die as an *"original"* was to be guided by Christ, and to look at Him constantly.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Sticks And Stones ...

And words can really hurt

Ever are such wondrous things which God has made for such good purpose, the hand of man has much abused. Never has there been a time so dark and cold and yet it is the same as yesteryear and before. The mind sees what the eyes cannot and yet the past is left forgotten, corrupted by the maggots of empty thoughts and selfishness. Sweet pleasant dreams of golden days are but dreams which never were, for man has better thoughts of what will be utopia.

Jesus said *"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone..."* yet how little do we remember his words. We certainly pay small heed to them for we seldom consider ourselves sinners. We may not toss stones at one another or beat someone with a stick but then sticks and stones are not the only way pain can be inflicted upon another.

An old adage, often used in a questionable attempt to persuade children to ignore taunts and teasing goes *"sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me."* While perhaps true with respect to breaking bones, words can and often do inflict pain and cause suffering, even harsher or more cruel than that which might result from stoning or lashing with a stick. The scars may last far longer although unseen, hidden deep within, invisible to all but the one so cruelly scarred.

Words can inflict mortal wounds, no less deadly than the stone or stick. And all too common, words are used to warp the mind, harden the heart, and kill the spirit, a tragedy so great, yet beyond the notice of all but God.

The means of our own demise will not come from instruments constructed to forever still the hearts of men nor will it be by brutal forces hell-bent on complete annihilation. No, it will be by our thoughts—or rather the abdication of our minds to think, to reason, and to pray—which will destroy what God has so wonderfully made.



God created all manner of creatures, big and small, yet only in man did he favor with an immortal soul, a mind so constructed for reasoned thought, free will to make independent choices, and the desire to know and love him. Throughout the course of human history, man has seldom used those gifts for their true purpose, which was for

the glory and honor of God.

Man's gift of mind, of independent and creative thought, has atrophied, is atrophying still, to the point where reason has either been lost or casually discarded, replaced by unreason, mindlessness, and selfish ego-centric sensibilities. In short, we have lost or are rapidly losing the ability to think beyond our selves, to seek the truth no matter which direction the compass points.

We use words now as weapons: not to kill but to destroy, not to describe but to defame, not to love but to hate, not to hope but to despair, not to build up but to tear down. Fact has been replaced by opinion, objective truth has become subjective, rational thought has been displaced by the irrational, meaning no longer has meaning, life is not worth living, death is but the end, man has created god.

The young especially, who have been inculcated by progressive ideological views largely devoid of historical facts, ask why many of an older generation fail to understand and accept their own worldview. They cannot or are unwilling to admit that their perspective is seriously flawed, based not on objective reality but on progressive utopian groupthink. They cannot see that which they have been taught may be untrue or some distortion of the truth. It is past time they learned the truth and the truth shall set them free. God gave each a mind to know the truth, so use it well.

When Carlo was 11 years old he began a project of cataloguing all of the Eucharistic miracles of the world. He wrote at the time, *"The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven."*

He asked his parents to take him to all the places where Eucharistic miracles had occurred and two and a half years later he had completed his project. In all, Carlo researched and documented over *"136 Eucharistic miracles that occurred over the centuries in different countries around the world, and have been acknowledged by the Church."* He created a website which contains a virtual museum containing all his research and findings.

In addition, he created panel presentations which have been displayed around the world. According to the introductory panel, *"In the United States alone, thanks to assistance from the Knights of Columbus, The Cardinal Newman Society and The Real Presence Association and Education, with the support of Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, it has been hosted in thousands of parishes and more than 100 universities."* The panels have been displayed on all five continents and have inspired many by their amazing photographs and beautiful stories.

"He remains an inspiration, especially to teenagers who aren't sure whether they could be both holy and "normal" and individually unique.

While he may have led a devout prayer life — he went to Mass everyday —

Carlo was very much interested in being a teenager in the 21st century. While his interests were very broad, he also found time to volunteer for work with children and the elderly for, as he said, "Our aim has to be the infinite and not the finite. The Infinite is our homeland. We have always been expected in Heaven."

OMG (that is Oh My God for those unfamiliar with text shorthand)! The maturity and holiness expressed by such a young man is difficult to comprehend yet goes well beyond inspirational. It is truly awe-inspiring and deeply humbling. What inspiration and truth are the words of Carlo Acutis, a teenage computer prodigy and genuinely saintly human being.

"Our aim has to be the infinite and not the finite. The Infinite is our homeland. We have always been expected in Heaven."

Never have I read anything so profound. I cannot help but believe this: that if each of us were to look deep into our souls and reflect on how near or far away we are in accepting the wisdom of those words, spoken by a teenage computer geek, we would see the world as it should be, a finite respite on the journey to our infinite homeland, where we are expected with eager anticipation. The finite is fleeting, the Infinite awaits.

The next stage in the canonization process is to send all the biographical works accumulated to Rome to be reviewed by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. If approved, the cause for Carlo Acutis will proceed and the Holy Father can declare him to be *"venerable."*

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

For those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.

BOOKS

Faith Comes From What Is Heard
Lawrence Feingold
Emmaus Academic
July 8, 2016, 756 pages.

Practical Theology
Peter Kreeft
Ignatius Press
November 28, 2014, 400 pages.

Orthodoxy
G. K. Chesterton
Digireads.com
March 30, 2004, 121 pages.
Originally published 1908.

PERIODICALS

First Things
Institute on Religion and Public Life
Editor: R. R. Reno
Ten Issues per year.
www.firstthings.com

Touchstone
A Journal of Mere Christianity
Editor: James M. Kushiner
Bi-Monthly.
www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine
Share the Faith, Defend the Faith
Editor: Tim Ryland
Bi-Monthly.
www.catholic.com

Once Upon A Dream

The measure of a man

Dreams, either good or bad, are ethereal, discarnate spirits so insubstantial as to deny memory of their purpose. Seldom do we retain what it was which we have dreamed beyond the vaguest sense of satisfaction or disquietude. Thus such vaporous memory gives us pause to question any mention of it or of its probative value, that is, what truth might our dreams impart.

Few, I must presume, would place much credence in their dreams. Fewer yet would admit to taking decisive, life-altering action to such a thing so exquisitely fragile. What man or woman would dare trust the extant images born of their somnolent mind to such a degree as to place one's self and others at serious risk?

Current Western social norms and cultural attitudes often hinder and even controvert any understanding of first-century Palestinian society and culture. What lies at the core of this great divide is the centrality of the covenantal relationship between the Chosen people of Israel and God. Modern Western secular societies have no similar proclivities; quite the opposite, for God resides, not at the center, but far outside the periphery of the secular mind, if at all.

To the Hebrews of the first century their society, culture, and their lives were ordered by the Law, the Torah, the Word of God. Their daily lives

were inextricably ruled by the laws received from God and set down by Moses. The modern Western mind finds great difficulty comprehending such devotion and adherence to divinely ordered rule.

Those accustomed to living in comfort and relative affluence, largely free from want or oppression cannot hope to ever fully realize the harsh, cruel, uncompromising environment that existed two-thousand years ago.



Those who find it perfectly acceptable to casually hook up, using the current vernacular, would be surprised to discover that a mere sixty or seventy years ago such moral casuistry would have been cause for public scorn and personal shame. Pregnancy outside of wedlock was so socially and culturally unacceptable that women who found themselves pregnant were sent away, hidden from public view until the birth of and subsequent adoption of the child. While abortion was available it was illegal and considered murder. For

Catholics and most Christians it was an grave mortal sin and such sin was taken with all due seriousness.

Two-thousand years ago, Jewish law demanded much harsher punishment for sins of the flesh. Pregnancy outside of marriage was considered adultery, a sin punishable through death by stoning. Should stoning not be adjudicated the life of a unmarried pregnant woman would be hardly much better than death. No man would wish to marry such a sinful woman who had an illegitimate child to support. Further, the woman's family would almost always shun and disenfranchise her. Life was overwhelmingly desperate and bleak.

Understanding this, one must wonder just how apprehensive and utterly frightened a poor, very young teenage girl, perhaps 14 or 15 years of age, might have been when confronted by a total stranger who tells her very bluntly that she will become pregnant—with God no less?

Considering the time and place where young Maryam lived, the news could not have been welcome news.

One can but wonder why anyone, certainly a young unmarried woman, given the society and culture in which she then lived, would acquiesce to such an honor. What did she tell her parents and how did they react? As a father of two daughters I don't believe I would have handled the unexpected news very well. I would definitely have questioned her sanity!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

The mother of God, right! The bible doesn't speak of this, no conversation was ever recorded. Although her relative Elizabeth appears to react favorably, Joseph certainly had a few issues with it. As we now know, adultery was a very serious matter, one that called for deadly punishment.

Mary grew up in a very small place; everyone knew everyone else, there simply weren't enough people for there to be strangers. I grew up in a small town and I remember whenever a wedding occurred, the calendars were marked to determine how long afterwards the newlyweds had their first child. It should come as no surprise that such pregnant news would spread quickly.

And yet despite all her fears, Mary, that young teenage girl, willingly and gracefully said "yes" to God's request. She could have said no, but instead her response, her fiat was simply, "May it be done to me according to your word." She freely set aside her own desires, opened her heart to the Holy Spirit, and accepted God's will as her own. She did not hesitate or question; she simply said "yes".

But what of Joseph?

There is much here to consider. Betrothal in first century Israel held few similarities with modern notions of engagement before marriage. Betrothal was the initial phase of the marriage process in which prospective spouses were set apart for each other.

In the ancient Mediterranean world, marriages were arranged by

parents to join extended families and not individuals. The bride did not expect love, companionship, or comfort. The world of Joseph and Mary was rigidly divided by gender, much as we see in the mid-eastern cultures today. There was very little contact between men and women on a daily basis. Both men and women understood their union was arranged for political or economic reasons of their respective families.

The entire process was highly ritualized. The women of both families negotiated the contract but the patriarchs of each family publicly ratified it. Only when the groom took the bride into his home was the process complete. Until then the couple was considered betrothed but not married. Although a betrothed couple did not live together, a formal divorce was required. Intimacy with a betrothed woman was considered adultery.

Joseph was a righteous man who, knowing he had violated no law or brought any shame to Mary, wanting to avoid further problems for her, was willing to divorce her quietly. But God had different ideas and so he sent a messenger to Joseph in a dream. Undoubtedly most men would think it more of a nightmare than a dream which of itself offers much to the good measure of Joseph.

As unimaginably difficult it must have been for Mary to have said "yes" to God, was Joseph's "yes" any less so? Imagine knowing that the woman to whom you are betrothed is bearing a child, a boy to be named Jesus, who is not your own "flesh and blood" but supposedly God's. As difficult as that

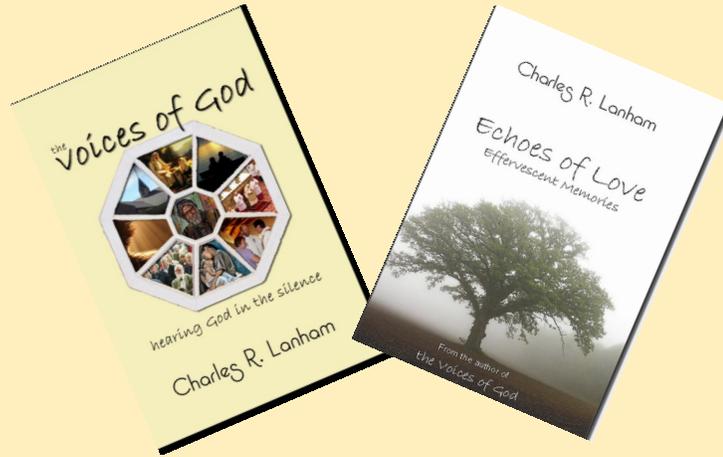
must have been, imagine how hard it would be to not only accept it but to take joy in it, to not feel in some way robbed. Whatever Joseph may have felt, as an earthly father he must have died a thousand deaths caring for Mary and her child, both of whom he had accepted in faith as belonging to one other than himself.

A question we should ask ourselves is "How can I know what God wants of me?" Perhaps the question we should ask is of what are we afraid? Not monsters under the bed fear but fear which comes from doubts and uncertainty. How often do we doubt ourselves or others because of what we don't know. How many dreams are stillborn because of the uncertainty of what lies ahead. How often do we hear Jesus say "Be not be afraid for I am always with you" and yet we cannot or do not listen.

What is it which causes us to hold onto our fears so tight. Why are we so reluctant to confront our fears? Is it because to do so means we must let go and lose control? News flash! We are not in control, God is. Trust in the Lord. Accept all that he asks and you will discover all that God has in store.

Accepting the will of the Unknowable means letting go, placing our lives in His capable and loving hands and saying "yes". Let us answer God's call as Mary did, "May it be done to me according to your word." Amen.

Homily for
Fourth Sunday of Advent (A)
Isaiah 7:10-14
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-24



Books are available on **Amazon.com** or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and is currently writing his third book **Without God: Finding God in a Godless World**.

He is the bulletin editor for Saint Albert the Great Catholic Church. He has written over 230 articles on religion, faith, morality, theology,

Each issue of **Colloquī** can be viewed or downloaded from

<http://deaconscorner.org>.

Deacon Chuck can be contacted thru email at

deacon.chuck@deaconscorner.org

Colloquī is a weekly publication of **Deacon's Corner Publishing**.
Copyright © 2016 by **Deacon's Corner Publishing**. All rights reserved.
Produced in the U.S.A. **www.deaconscorner.org**

Deacon's Corner Publishing

4742 Cougar Creek Trail
Reno, Nevada 89519